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WHAT PRODUCED THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

ORATION

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BY

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THE ORATION.

In the history of the past there has been no sentiment more general than the desire of every race or tribe to perpetuate the remembrance of the events that distinguish them as a separate people. Before the art of writing was invented the rude cairn that marked the site of a decisive battle, or the primitive ballad that preserved its incidents, attest how early and how deeply this feeling was implanted, and as civilization advanced, and a knowledge of the arts supplied other means of gratifying this natural instinct, it found expression in the epic poem, in the celebration of the anniversary days of heroes by libations, sacrifices, and the crowning of their tombs with garlands—as in Greece; or by the religious observance of periods of national deliverance such as the Jewish passover; or by the erection of stately monuments or memorial inscriptions, like the obelisks of Egypt, or the sculptured halls of Ninevah.

Among the rigorous laws of Draco, so severe that they were said to have been written in blood, there was one denoting how important this early lawgiver deemed it to perpetuate in the memory of the people their national events, and the personages or heroes connected with them. Let, it, said this enactment, be a sacred and inviolable law to pay public homage to the Gods and to the national heroes. And in enjoining the seven days annual celebration of the deliverance of the Jews, how earnest is the language of Moses. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, for in this self same day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt and ye shall therefore keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generaiions—Ye shall keep it a feast, by an ordinance forever.

For ninety-nine years the American people have commemorated with national rejoicings the annual return of the day from which they date their commencement as a nation. Mrs. Trollope, who could find little to commend in American institutions or manners, was struck with the effect which the return of this day produced. After remarking that a dreary coldness and want of enthusiasm, was one of the greatest defects of the American character, she says, that on the Fourth of July however, the hearts of the people seem to

awaken from a sleep of 364 days and that we then become high-spirited, gay, animated, social, generous, and liberal. That the women have little to do with the pageantry, the splendor, or the gaiety of the day, but setting aside this defect, it is, she says, a glorious sight to see a jubilee so heartfelt as this, were it not for the bad taste they exhibit by uttering annual orations, an exhibition of bad taste, upon the present occasion, for which Mr. Carpenter and the committee are responsible, who invited me here and afforded me the opportnnity to perpetrate it.

Mrs. Trollope condemns this custom of commemorating the day in all parts of the country by the delivery of an oration as in very bad taste, because such productions, she says, abound in invariable abuse of the mother country. She could scarcely expect the orator, after the reading of the wrongs, injuries and usurpations that are recited in the Declaration of Independence to entertain his audience by praising the mother country, for the part she then acted, or to abstain from any reference to it, for fear he might speak disrespectfully of her. A 4th of July oration would not be a 4th of July oration without dwelling upon the event which the celebration of the day was intended to commemorate, and upon the present occasion, I shall, as eminently appropri ate, in view of the near approach of the centennial, devote the whole of my address to the American Revolution.

It is not as the effort of a people to shake off a government that had grown burdensome and oppressive that the American Revolution has its chief significance. Regarded in that light, history is not unfruitful of examples, in which a people have overthrown a tyrannical government, or resisted the attempt to impose one, and some of those instances have surpassed it in military achievements. Indeed the love of military glory, or the desire for a separate nationality had very little to do with the causes which produced it.

So far as respects the appeal to arms, it was an act of necessity and not of choice. An act of necessity after the failure of petitions, supplication and remonstrances, which was undertaken with a high sense of moral accountability and under deep religious convictions. "If we mean not to abandon," said the eloquent Henry, uttering the sentiment of the time "if we mean not to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon, we must fight. An appeal to arms and the God of Hosts is all that is left us," and this spirit is still more clearly indicated in the preamble and resolutions adopted at the convention of Delegates assembled at Williamsburgh, in Virginia, on the 6th of May, 1776. After referring in the preamble to the endeavors that had been made by the United Colonies to restore peace and security to America, and to continue under the British government upon just and liberal terms, and that those endeavors had produced no other effect, but increased oppressions; they conclude their preamble by declaring that they appeal to the searcher of all hearts, for the sincerity with which as colonists, they desired to preserve their connection with Great Britain, and that they were driven from it only by the eternal law of self-preservation.

The American revolution in its most significant light, is to be regarded as an important event in a long series of causes, which led to the gradual developement of ideas that had kept pace with the advance of intelligence in Europe, pre-eminent among which was the belief in the doctrine of political equality.

It is not as literally expressed in the Declaration of Independence, that all men are born equal, for they are not ; on the contrary, they are born unequal physically, intellectually and morally. What is meant is that no man is born to greater rights under government than any other, and that peculiar privileges or exclusive rights, arising from the circumstances of birth, have no foundation in natural reason, and are not found by human experience to be essential to the due institution and successful carrying on of government.

The circumstances connected with the settlement of North America were peculiarly fitted to nourish to maturity this hardy plant of political equality. The dignity and necssity of labor among those who had undertaken to convert the wilderness into a dwelling place, readily rejected the artificial distinctions of European society and brought to the level of individual worth and social equality the high born and the low. The dependence upon individual exertion for the supply of natural wants begat simplicity of manners and reared up a sturdy spirit of self-reliance that has never forsaken the American character. The knowledge and experience of civilization was harmonised and purified by the surrounding influences of nature.

The boundless magnificence with which their Creator's works were spread before the colonists brought them into more extensive communion with nature than would have been possible in Europe, and freed their minds from those restraints which artificial society imposes. In penetrating the depths of magnificent forests, in following the course of noble rivers, and in the varied life incident to their woodland settlements, they were everywhere near unto nature, and it gave them a feeling of independence and of personal equality, which they stamped upon the free institutions they founded.

When the rising importance and wealth of the colonies began to attract the cupidity of the mother country and it was deemed politic to plunder them by onerous exactions under pretence of protecting and governing them, they submitted to it at first, not from an acquiescence in its justice or legality, but partly from a reverence for the land they had left and partly from their inability to resist it. The great principles that had been engrafted upon them remained as indelibly impressed as ever and when the weight of those exactions drove them at last to Revolution, these principles sustained them in every vicissitude and rendered them finally triumphant.

A happy variety of circumstances distinctly connected with the settlement and progress of each colony contributed to the general advancement of the principles of civil liberty.

Montesquieu has said that every people must be developed according to the law of their origin and the origin and developement of the North American colonies was a striking proof of the correctness of this maxim.

Virginia owed its settlement to the greedy cupidity of a London company,

and the desire of a few needy adventurers, of worthless character and dissolute lives, to repair their shattered fortunes by acquiring treasures in its fertile regions which the glowing imagination of previous voyagers had led them to expect. But the gradual developement of its more valuable agricultural riches soon attracted to its shores, the good, the virtuous and the wise, and rendered it from the industrious pursuits of its people, and the rich productiveness of its soil, a well ordered, thriving and wealthy community. The principles of Republicanism kept pace with the progress of the colony. Its first great effort was to release itself from the mercenary grasp of the corporation that founded it and advance in the scale of political importance by claiming and joyfully accepting the high distinction of a Royal province.

The act that rendered it the favorite of the Crown, though it generated a feeling of loyalty, did not impair the progress of those principles that were rapidly modeling its government, and the Revolution in England in 1640 found it in the undisturbed enjoyment of the right of suffrage, of an unrestricted trade and of an independent colonial Legislature.

It says much for the political character of Cromwell, that while concentrating the energies of England in his own person he did no act to impair the rising liberties of America; on the contrary his administration leaned with strong affection to the Puritan settlements of New England and though the loyalty of Virginia stimulated by an attachment to the deposed monarch caused it openly to deny his authority, yet its prompt recognition afterwards led to a full confirmation of former rights and the extension of privileges not previously enjoyed.

The restoration of Charles II. gave an unhappy impulse to the progress of arbitrary power in Europe and while generally injurious to the whole of the colonies, was particularly fatal to the liberties of Virginia. The unwarrantable monopoly of its great staple, Tobacco, by the restrictive clauses of the act of Navigation, the establishment of a National church, an irresponsible judiciary, a fixed revenue for the crown, the abolition of biennial assemblies and the great right of universal suffrage and finally the wanton gift of the whole province to a venal adherant of the Court, successively swept away those rights that Virginia had dearly cherished and gave rise to the memoriable rebellion awakened and directed by the genius of that first great apostle of American Liberty, the heroic Nathaniel Bacon. It is worthy of note in tracing the progress of the Revolution that a hundred years before the Declaration of Independence, Virginia was the theatre of a bloody struggle for the same rights that afterwards united all of the colonies in arms. Though with the untimely death of Bacon and thebloody execution of his brave companions, the prospect of immediate liberty vanished, its principles imperishably survived. The fires of Smithfield were not more remarkable for counteracting the persecutions of religious intolerance, than were the scaffolds upon which the first martyrs of Virginian liberty perished, for generating in the soil they desecrated, an unquenchable love of independence. The policy of the mother county in the after progress of the colony, kept the spirit unceasingly active, and when the

flames of revolution burst forth, Virginia entered the compact of Sovereign states and gave to the sacred cause of independence, her whole mind, her whole heart, and her whole people.

Nor were the circumstances connected with the settlement of New England less important in generating the principles which gave rise to the American Revolution. The devotion to civil and religious liberty that induced the Puritans to forsake the allurements of civilized life, the homes of their infancy and the attachments of their kindred, with no prospect of ever returning, for the dangers of a boisterous sea and a home in an inhospitable wilderness was an element of character too strong and powerful in its nature not to have produced a lasting effect in the land they selected for their resting place. Occupying an elevated social position in their native country, and uniting the refinements of education with the advantages of wealth, they were above the ordinary motives of adventure, and presented in their settlements the moral spectacle of a people nobly sacrificing personal advantages for the triumph of principles and the rights of conscience. Political equality, governed, influenced and regulated by a deep religious spirit, lay at the base of the little democracies that sprung up from their infant settlements; although this religious spirit was narrow and exclusive. It did not recognize any right of conscience in those who differed in religious belief. Verging upon fanaticism, it tarnished their fame with intolerance, and led them to unwarrantable and cruel persecutions, but the natural working of their equalizing system of government gradually awakened a more tolerant feeling.

Under the guise of unmeaning charters, their descendants adroitly preserved, by shrewd construction and ingenious management, the free institutions bequeathed to them, and when the arbitrary course of Great Britain presented no alternative but the surrender of institutions transmitted by their fathers, their affection for which was nurtured from childhood and made strong by habit, they paused not to reflect upon the dangers of death, the horrors of war, or the treason of rebellion, but entered the contest with a lofty sense of moral uprightness and adhered to it with a spirit of undying attachment.

The peaceful settlements of the Quakers in Pennsylvania and New Jersey had the happiest effects upon the colonial character. Their bloodless intercourse with the natives and their equitable purchase of the territory they enjoyed, were in striking contrast with the more violent settlement of other colonies. A persecuted people, not only in the land they had left, but in that they came to adorn, they had learned humility and practiced peace. An abiding sense of justice and a strong perception of natural rights, guided their path, and the innumerable blessings that flow from peace, virtue, and humanity followed in their footsteps; and though the Quakers as a class, took no part in the revolution, nay, openly opposed it, still the principles of equality they inculcated, their simplicity of manners and moral independence had no inconsiderable share in bringing about the very event against which they saw fit to array themselves. The workings of the "inner light," as the Quakers beautifully denominate the soul-searching impulses of benevolence and humanity,

was destined for deep revelations. The prophetic injunction from Leviticus inscribed as early as 1765, upon that proud old national relic, the bell now about to be restored to the steeple of the State House of Philadelphia, "Proclaim liberty throughout the land and unto the ends thereof," was destined to be realized by proclaiming a deed from the land of Penn which announced that the night of colonial vassalage was past and that the dawn of liberty was breaking—that bore to the nations of the earth the fact that the colonies of America had severed the ties that bound them to Great Britain, and had irrevocably proclaimed themselves free and independent.

The mild and tolerant spirit that went forth from the Catholic settlement in Maryland, gradually diffusing itself and gently counteracting, by the force of example, the intolerance of New England, purified and strengthened the love for civil liberty.

The Dutch races that peopled the States of New-York and a part of New Jersey formed an important ingredient of the material that propelled the revolution. The interior of New Jersey, which became so prominent in the subsequent military struggle, was colonised by Baptists and Presbyterians, who had fled from tests and persecutions to a place of security where they could enjoy their opinions and practice unmolested their own modes of religious worship. New-York was a conquered colony, and from this circumstance its development was different from the others. The English there were a ruling class, inferior in numbers to the Dutch, and more aristocratic in their pretentions, manners and love of control. The principal English families, or, as they called themselves, "people of figure," were a provincial and governing aristocracy, in which the Dutch element was represented to a limited extent by such of the descendents of the Dutch as had intermarried in these families, or had acquired fortunes in commerce, or were influential through the possession of land. The Dutch throughout the history of the colony were slow to mingle with the dominant English until after the Revolution, which placed a Dutch Prince upon the throne of England as William III. They were industrious, persevering, and frugal; content, if let alone, to leave the government in the hands of the race that had acquired the colony by conquest, but at the same time deeply imbued with the republican sentiments and jealous love of liberty they had derived from their ancestors in Holland. Slow as they were to move, the attempt of one of their number, Leisler, to overthrow the aristocratic party and organize a government upon the basis of civil and religious liberty, had their fullest sympathy: a sympathy which was intensified by his death upon a scaffold. They were largely represented in the city of New-York, where there was also, when the differences with Great Britain began, a small, but highly influential body, the descendents of the Hugeonots who had settled there. From the character of the majority of its population therefore, and the injurious effects of the British Colonial acts upon its commerce and industrial interests, the city of New-York was from the outset, warm in the popular cause. But that city was also the home of some of the most devoted adherents of the British crown. Many wealthy and in-

fluential families resided there whose aristocratic feelings had crystalized into a loyalty, which no considerations of personal interests and no act of the British Government could in the slightest degree impair. This class which was even more largely represented in the other parts of the colony, exercised through family associations and other means, an influence so powerful as to constantly check and embarass the popular movement, and New-York was the last of the colonies to give in its adhesion to the cause of independence.

The States of North and South Carolina, the former, the planting ground of the wild and philosophic Raleigh, were early imbued with the spirit of colonial independence. The elaborate constitution drawn up for their government by Locke, the philosopher, which, to satisfy the ambition of Shaftesbury, was devised for the purpose of perpetuating an hereditary aristocracy by parcelling out the government into landed proprietaries, fell harmlessly upon a people who, from the practical working of a government which had grown out of their wants and necessities, smiled at the theoretical production of the English philosopher.

The revocation of the edict of Nantes and the cruel persecutions that followed it, drove the French protestants from the peaceful valleys of Languedoc to seek a home, personal security, and the rights of conscience in the unfettered wilds of North America. The bitter persecutions that drained France of some of the bravest and best of her sons, gave to the State of South Carolina a host of intelligent, virtuous, and independent settlers, who, engrafting their principles upon the soil they adopted, gave to the colony a well tempered love of freedom that was prompt at the call of the revolution.

The colony of Georgia was founded for an object very different from any of the motives which led to the settlement of the other colonies. It was to carry out a philanthropic experiment which had been earnestly advocated by several European philanthropists, the removal of inmates of jails to a region where they could commence life anew and, uncontaminated by the influence of former associations, devote themselves to industrial pursuits and lead a moral life, having no inducement to lead any other. The founder of Georgia, Gen. Oglethorpe, was deeply impressed with the importance of this measure, and devoted himself earnestly to carrying it out, but from many causes, but little in this respect, was accomplished. A far more important feature in his scheme was to establish in Georgia a place of refuge for the persecuted protestants of Germany, which brought there the Moravians and Lutherians, whose influence was felt in the early settlement, and the colony being afterward augmented by Scotch and other settlers, and being left to its own development gradually passed into an upright and self-reliant community, which in its public sentiment, progress and institutions, very much resembled the other colonies.

The example of natural democracy presented in the government of the aboriginal tribes they supplanted, was an instructive lesson to the colonists, if they had derived nothing from other sources, in perfecting the principles of Republicanism. Though the Indian tribes were characterized by that rude

ferocity incident to savage life, still their government was a natural one, and possessed the quality of developing their powers, however directed, to the fullest extent. Exclusively devoted to the rude pursuits of war and hunting, they selected for their chiefs or leaders the individuals who excelled in these pursuits, and thus by rendering the reward of merit certain, they were sure of effectually developing whatever powers they possessed. In many things affecting the government of the community, the women had an influence. In some of the tribes they had a controlling one in the question of war, and the Indian Council where the whole people assembled to deliberate and precedence was given to age and experience, was in itself a model of wisdom. In the more southern latitudes of Mexico and South America, the effeminate aborigines sunk into monarchies and were governed by Incas or Kings, but the fierce, free and hardy tribes of North Americea allowed no superiority not based upon merit, and conferred no power that was not exercised for the general benefit.

I have thus rapidly sketched the causes which led to the settlement of each colony, the circumstances under which it was developed, and the institutions, interests, and sentiments that grew up in it as a consequence. When these are properly weighed it will be seen that the American revolution was different from any other event in history.

It was not the act of a people suddenly awakening from the bondage of ages and through blood and slaughter claiming their rights, but the fixed and settled resistance of a people long accustomed to their exercise, and who had resolutely determined never to surrender them.

It was an act deliberately conceived, deliberately begun, and deliberately executed. A war less to establish freedom than to preserve it; a bold and successful assertion of political rights, that filled monarchs with alarm and shook the stability of thrones.

The very outset of the revolution was marked by that deliberative dignity that characterized its progress from its beginning to its close. Though the massacre of Lexington stirred up the minds of the colonists to the highest pitch of indignant resistanee, they never in the warm ebullition of excitement forgot the great principles involved.

Solemnly impressed with the righteousness of their cause, and desirous of removing from it the brand of rebellion, their first great general act was to put forth that broad declaration of rights and grievances, the promulgation of which we are this day assembled to commemorate. This dignified exposition of wrongs and principles comprehensively reveals the great motive of the struggle, and would alone, if every other record should perish, tell the tale in history. The colonists foresaw, with intuitive wisdom, that an effort to cast off a government, the authority of which was in accordance with the well settled usages of nations, required some explanation in the eyes of the world, to distinguish it from a factious revolt against constituted authority.

Emanating from such motives and put forth under such circumstances, the American Declaration of Independence was one of the most dignified and

deliberate acts recorded in the history of nations. Kingdoms have been overthrown, States revolutionized, and Dynasties destroyed from time immemorial, but in no instance before had the great physical effort been preceded by a written declaration of rights, grievances, and causes, proceeding from the representative wisdom of the revolting parties in solemn council assembled. The several States of the Netherlands in 1579 entered into the compact against Philip II, known as the Union of Utrecht, and at the assembling of the States General at Antwerp in 1580, they formally renounced the sovereignty of Spain and declared the united provinces of the Netherlands to be thereafter a free and independent State. But this was after a bloody struggle of more than ten years' duration, when they had successfully resisted the whole military power of Spain, and had by the defeat of the Spanish armies that had been sent against them, practically established their independence. But the American declaration was put forth before the colonists had tried their strength, or had any means of judging whether they would be able or not to cope with the military power of Great Britain. The skirmish at Lexington and the stubborn resistance at Bunker Hill. was an encouraging evidence of the spirit of the people, and served to impress upon every colony that nothing remained but subjection or armed resistance. But it was resistance against what was then the greatest military power in the world; a nation which claimed the mastery of the seas, that dictated terms in the councils of Europe, and which had just established its sway over Bengal, leaving the subjugated people of that large and fertile region of the globe, a prey to military despots and plundering nabobs. What the effect would be of an armed struggle with such a power might lead the bravest people and the most sagacious statesmen to hesitate, especially in view of the well known historical fact that no government had up to that time, been more energetic in the conquest, or more summary in the punishment of those who revolted against its authority.

There was not only this consideration, but the government in the dispute with the colonies had never yielded an inch; for although the stamp act was repealed in 1766, the repeal was accompanied by a declaratory act asserting the supreme power of Parliment over the colonies "in all cases whatsoever." Resistance had produced only additionel exactions, and there was the most unmistakeable indication, not only of the government's determination to enforce its authority, but also that it looked with a feeling of contempt at the pretence of military resistance on the part of the colonies. It is in view of this state of things that makes it so remarkable that the delegates of the respective colonies assembled in congress at Philadelphia, should with such unanimity, gravity and decision, put forth this declaration to the world, and then deliberately proceed to organize a distinct and independent government.

That patriotic body was fully impressed by all the considerations which I have mentioned. The majority of its members, however, were convinced, and the conviction entertained by that majority was very general among the people, that the attempt of Great Britain to subjugate the colonies, by military force, was simply impossible. But there were many members of the body,

thoughtful, earnest, and patriotic men, who had grave doubts upon that subject; who were of the opinion that the time had not yet come for taking so decided a step, and who thought it would be more prudent to wait until there was some means of judging what it might be in the power of the colonies to accomplish by armed resistance. On the other hand it was urged that the Continental army was already in the field, and that if they achieved successes, the full effect of them would not be felt, as the colonies would still be regarded by the world as in rebellion; whereas, if they deliberately declared themselves a free and independent nation, every success achieved would be a success of the nation, and a step towards its final establishment. Still, when the decisive day arrived, the 2d of July, for taking the vote upon the resolution, the result was doubtful. Only seven of the thirteen colonies had instructed their delegates to vote for it. The delegates of five of the other colonies were authorized to act as they thought best, and the delegates of the remaining colony, (New-York), were not author ized to take any action whatever. When the resolution came up, speeches were made for and against it. But before the preliminary vote was taken in the Committee of the whole, the remarkable words uttered by one man, from his sacred calling, the great weight of his character, and the effect which his personal presence produced upon every body he addressed, appears to have confirmed the hesitating. This was Dr John Witherspoon, the President of Princeton College, a Scotch Presbyterian divine, whose male ancestors for two hundred years had been ministers of the gospel, and who, by his mother's side, was a lineal descendant of John Knox.

The words were these: "That noble instrument on your table should be subscribed this very morning by every pen in this house. He that will not respond to its accents, and strain every nerve to carry into effect its provisions, is unworthy the name of freeman. For my own part, of property I have some, of reputation I have more. That reputation is staked, that property is pledged on the issue of this contest. And although these gray hairs must soon descend into the sepulchre, I would infinitely rather they should descend thither by the hands of the public executioner, than desert, at this crisis, the sacred cause of my country." The vote was taken, and nine colonies replied in the affirmative. This was looked upon as decisive, and when the Committee of the whole rose, and the final vote was then taken, with the President, John Hancock, in the chair, twelve colonies answered in the affirmative, and the Nation was born.

To the Sovereign, to the governing classes, and to the Parliment, no task seemed to be easier than to bring the colonies to subjection. It was looked upon at the outset as a disaffection that would disappear at the mere presence of a sufficient military force. In the opinion of the King and his ministers, four regiments would be sufficient to bring the colonies to obedience. The prospect of prolonged resistance, much less of eventual independence, was never dreamed of, and when they found their disciplined armies gradually disappearing before the indomitable spirit of colonial resistance; their sagacity outmatched by colonial statesmen, their boasted superiority humbled by those

they had despised, it was difficult to realize it,—difficult even to believe it. Year after year their exchequer was drained and their troops poured forth, but the buoyant spirit of the colonists arose as elastic as ever. The government not only sent the flower of their army to America, but resorted to the employment of foreign mercenaries and brought the Indians to their aid, yet with all this effort Great Britain found it impossible to overthrow a people animated by principles to which she was herself indebted for her own superiority, and after fruitlessly laboring for seven years to accomplish it, she awoke to the conciousness of her folly, with a treasury exhausted, her prestige impaired and a continent lost.

That this would be the result was apparent to a few leading minds in Great Britain, such as Chatham, Camden, Barre, and some others, but they were few in number, and wholly without influence. Lord Chatham in opposing a policy that he could not prevent, predicted the impossibility of conquering America and the philosophic Lord Kames ten years before the outbreak that resulted in Independence, foresaw the future destiny of the American States In a treatise that he has left, entitled the "History of Man," published in 1765, he predicted, in the following remarkable passage, not only the eventual independence of the Colonies, but what is much more remarkable their after form of government.

"Our North American colonies," he says, "are in a prosperous condition, increasing rapidiy in population and in opulence. The Colonists have the spirit of a free people and are inflamed with patriotism. Their population will equal that of Great Britain and Ireland in less than a century, and they will then be a match for the mother country if they chose to be independent. Every advantage will be on their side as the attack must be by sea from a very great distance. When delivered from a foreign yoke their first care will be in the choice of a government, and it is not difficult to foresee what that government will be. A people animated with the new blessings of liberty and independence will not incline to a kingly government. We may pronounce with assurance that each colony will choose for itself a Republican Government. Their present constitution prepares them for it; they have a Senate and they have an Assembly representing the people. No change will be necessary; they will have but to drop the Governor who represents the King of Great Britain and their system is complete."

In conversing with Mr. Bancroft, the distinguished historian, respecting this remarkable prediction, he said it would be extraordinary that a judge living in Edinburgh, and who had never been in the Colonies, should make such a prediction, but for a fact which he happened to know from some papers and correspondence that had come into his hands; which was that Lord Kames was acquainted with Franklin; that they met in London before the publication of this book and saw a great deal of each other. This will account for the knowledge which this prediction exhibited of the real condition of things in America; whilst at the same time it shows the penetration and profoundness of Lord Kames, in deducing a conclusion from the information

of Franklin, which at the time must have been regarded by most of his contemporaries as an idle speculation.

The persistency of the ministry, the parliament and all who approved of the measures that produced the revolution, as well as the dogged determination with which the military struggle was kept up for so many years with such adverse results, is now known to have been chiefly owing to the personal influence and will of the King. The writer of a recent paper in an English review, supposed to be Mr. Gladstone, has pointed out to what extent it is in the power of an English sovereign to control the administration of the affairs of the nation, if he is disposed to devote himself to the public business and go through the labor that is requisite. George III. had this disposition in as great a degree as any English monarch, at a time when it was easier than it is now to make the government, the government of a single man, and what rendered the exercise of such a power in his case especially unfortunate was, that whilst he was of very limited understanding, he was at the same time conscientious; believing that what he did was not only his right, but his duty. He took all appointments into his own hands; controlled parliament by a system of bribery and corruption which, he managed himself, and was content with no ministry that did not carry out his views and yield to him in every thing. The strange spectacle was presented amongst a people so jealous of their rights as the English, of a monarch, who by his misjudged foreign and colonial policy, brought the nation nearly to the brink of ruin, and who yet was popular with the people, through his domestic virtues and their belief, which was well founded, in his sincerity. The colonists understood him thoroughly. They knew him to be narrow-minded and strong-willed. A man indifferent to, because incapable of appreciating the value of constitutional rights and whose idea of government was one carried on by himself. He was, in fact, the government, and they knew it. They felt that he was the source of the difficulties that had arisen between them and the mother country, and the obstacle to any removal of them, and hence, in the Declaration of Independence, it is not the English nation, nor the English people who are arraigned; but "the *present* King of Great Britain." It is his "history" which, it is declared, "is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations," Each of the twenty-nine counts in the great indictment that follows, begin with the words: "He has," &c., and their enumeration closes by describing him as "A prince whose character is *thus* marked by every act which may define a tyrant." They refer to their British brethren as having been conjured by all the ties of a common kindred to disavow his usurpations; but as being deaf to the voice of justice and consanguinity; a long passage in the original draft of the declaration referring in harsher terms to the British people and renouncing them as "unfeeling brethren," having been struck out in the committee. When he read this declaration and saw the light in which he was presented he was no doubt greatly exasperated, and they meant that he should be.

That a milder policy on the part of Great Britain would have deferred the Independence of the colonies to a future period is certainly probable, but the

colonists were too accurately acquainted with the advantages of a separation not eventually to desire and to demand it. Their remote position, their natural advantages and the importance of developing their resources uncontrolled, could not but in time forcibly arrest the attention of a people so bold, so shrewd and so enterprising. The impossibility of a British Legislature regulating the vast internal affairs of the colonies was apparent and was very felicitously put in January 1776, by one of the most forcible of the revolutionary writers :

"The business of this continent is too weighty," he says, "to be managed with any tolerable degree of convenience by a power so distant from us and so very ignorant of us, for if they cannot conquer us they cannot govern us. To be always running three or four thousand miles with a tale or a petition, waiting four or five months for an answer, which when obtained, requires five or six more to explain it in, will, in a few years, be looked upon as folly and childishness; there was a time when it was proper and there is a proper time for it to cease." "Small Islands," he continues, "not capable of protecting themselves, are the proper objects for kingdoms to take under their care, but there is something absurd in supposing a continent to be perpetually governed by an Island. In no instance hath nature made the satellite larger than the primary planet and as England and America, with respect to each other reverse the common order of nature, it is evident that they belong to different systems, England to Europe, America to itself."

The success of the American Revolution was due, amongst other causes, to the distance of the Colonies from Great Britain ; to the great extent of country over which it was necessary to carry on offensive miltary operations ; to the aid given by France at a critical period and to the clearness with which the people understood, and the earnestness in which they believed in the political principles involved ; for, as was long ago observed by Webster and others there was little positive oppression. It was the assumption of the authority and control over them claimed by Great Britain, after the Colonies by their own efforts had become wealthy and important, that they resisted from a clear perception of what the future consequences would be if the acts of the colonial Legislatures in the management of their local affairs, were to be subject to a parliament in England, which might disregard them, overrule them, or repeal them, without the colonies having any voice or representation in this imperial Legislature ; a body that assumed the right to govern them in respect to any thing connected with their local interests or in any way it thought proper, no matter how disastrous to them or ruinous to their interests, the policy, or course of that parliament might be. In a word, the colonists claimed that they had not by founding an English colony, lost their rights as English subjects and that one of the most important of these rights was the right of representation. They demanded that either their Legislatures should be let alone in all matters pertaining to the interest of a colony, or if all their measures or laws were to be subject to the consent of the British parliment, then they insisted that each colony or the colonies collectively had a right to a proportionate representa-

tion in that body. What the English parliament claimed and by the passage of the stamp act exercised, was the power of imposing an internal tax upon them to cover their proportionate part of the expense of the French and Indian war, England having by that and the seven years' war incurred a debt of one hundred and forty millions. The colonists did not question their obligation to bear their part of the cost of a war, waged chiefly for their benefit. What they insisted upon was that if it were to be raised in the colonies by taxtion, it should be imposed by their Legislatures, where the people of the colonies were represented; upon a fundamental principle of the British Constitution, that taxation and representation went together, and they expressed their entire willingness to raise their proportion of the debt, by laws enacted by their own Legislatures. They conceeded that the right to regulate commerce was in the general parliament of the mother country. They submitted, therefore, to the imposition of import duties at colonial ports, and when this right of regulating commerce was harshly exercised, by confining the colonial trade to British ports, they did not deny its legality, but met its injustice by what was equally legal, a general pledge to use no British manufactures. It was not only, therefore, the clearness with which the question in dispute was comprehended, but the extent to which a knowledge of the true nature and object of government was diffused amongst the people, that accounts for the unamanity which existed amongst all classes, and the union of opinion which prevailed between those who were entrusted with the management of the affairs of each colony.

The extent to which the public mind was informed in respect to government, its just limits and appropriate sphere, was thus one of the most remarkable features of the revolution and distinuishes it from every previous effort of any people involved in a like contest; surpassing in this respect even the intelligent struggle of the people of the Netherlands. This was due in part to the circumstances I have referred to in the founding, settlement, and progress of each colony, and in part to the number of remarkable public documents and other writings, that appeared during the twelve years that proceeded the revolution. They were the product of many minds, but in my judgment pre-eminent over all others in their effect, were the writings of Samuel Adams, generally embodied in the form of public documents, which were widely disseminated and eagerly read. They furnished the material that supplied ideas to leading men and to the various assemblies of delegates convened in the different colonies. This man, though holding the comparatively subordinate position of clerk of the Massachusetts Legislature was the one who may be said to have forged the intellectual thunderbolts of the revolution, for the ideas to which he gave birth found their way into many a resolve of a colonial assembly and may be said to pervade nearly every part of the Declaration of Independence. Samuel Adams had studied the subject of government more profoundly than any other man in America. He had a sharp, incisive New England intellect, that penetrated to the very root of things and in the use of language, he wrote with a plainness, simplicity and force, that conveyed the idea that he wished to express

directly to the popular mind. Another remarkable writer supplied what was wanted when the moment for action arrived. Upon the suggestion of three men, Saml. Adams, Dr. Franklin and Dr. Rush, Thomas Paine, in January 1776, wrote that remarkable pamphlet, divided into four parts, to which he gave the title of Common Sense. This in a popular form presented the whole question between the colonies and Great Britain, with the greatest perspicuity, and by the most persuasive and convincing reasoning showed that there was nothing left for them but to seperate from Great Britain and establish an independent government. It is impossible at this day fully to appreciate the effect which this pamphlet produced. Dr. Rush says that "it burst from the press with an effect that has rarely been produced by types and paper in any age or country," and Ramsay in his history of the American Revolution declares that it was read by and convinced thousands who had never before thought of separation. In the opening page of this pamphlet Paine exclaims:

"Now is the seed time of Continental Union, faith and honor. The least fracture now will be like a name engraved with the point of a pin upon the tender rind of a young oak: the wound will enlarge with the tree and posterity read it in full grown characters." The name engraved that year upon the young sapling of independence, was The United States, population, Three Millions. The name upon the sturdy oak of to-day is The United States, population, Thirty-Eight Millions.

I have limited my address to the causes of the Revolution and the political questions upon which it turned; but I cannot close it without a parting word about the soldiers by whom it was successfully carried through. Those who measure military achievements by the magnitude of military operations, or the skill displayed in the management of great armies in their contests with each other, will find much in the records of offensive and defensive warfare to outvie the exploits of the revolution. But in the exhibition of the qualities which elevate the soldier from a mercenary dealer in war and bloodshed, to the unpurchased defender of the rights and liberties of his country, there is not to be found in the history of mankind a nobler example than was displayed by the men who fought the battles of the revolution. It presented the rare military spectacle of a people with no other experience than such as the French and Indian war had afforded, going suddenly forth from the quiet pursuits of civil life—from the work-bench, the study, and the plough; submissively yielding to the restraints of military discipline; accepting with little complaint the trials incident to campaigns of peculiar hardship, from the nature of the country and the highly disciplined forces with which they had to contend, and who throughout, were poorly clothed, imperfectly armed, indifferently fed, and still more indifferently paid, or who served without any pay at all. Soldiers returning when the opportunity offered, to their fields to look after their families and domestic interests, but reappearing again and resuming their service, when an advance of the enemy or other contingency required an augmenting of the continental forces. Doing this during a war of seven years'

duration, and, when the object for which it was waged was accomplished, quietly disbanding, sinking again into the bosom of society, and losing the character of the soldier and the hero in those quiet pursuits they had originally left at the call of their country. In many other revolutions the soldiers by whom they were achieved became afterward ready instruments for elevating to power the military leader by whom they were commanded, and surrendered up the State to his ambitious designs, and purposes. But at the close of the American revolution, the leader and the private passed at once into the ordinary ranks of society, with no other distinction except the grateful recognition of their services by their fellow citizens, and the silent homage paid to them during life, for having fought in the revolution.

This was something more than mere military glory. But if the sterner deeds of battle move you; if your blood is stirred by the deep resolve, the iron will, and the unyielding spirit displayed in deeds that rival aught that has been heard in mythic tale or classic story—if you love to contemplate the energy that springs spontaneously from the human soul and inspires us to defend the land we were born in—go read it in the tale of the yeoman who defended the redoubt upon the heights of Bunker Hill, or the "Hunting Shirts," who fought upon the plains of Saratoga!

The present generation has seen this spectacle of the rising of the people, and their peaceful retirement when the contest was over, in the war for the establishment of the Union, repeated in another war of greater magnitude for the preservation of the Union. We have lived to see this contest settled by that last arbitrament, the appeal to arms; to see the North triumphant in the vindication of the cause of the whole country; to see the South acquiescing and finally admitting its necessity—and when the centennials rolled around that brought back the recollection of the events and the scenes of the revolution, and the people of Boston were assembled on the 17th of last June to commemorate, after a hundred years had elapsed, the struggle that took place upon that day; we have seen a distinguished Southern General, Fitzhugh Lee, accompanied by others who had fought for the separation of the South, come to that hill, which is the Mecca of the American revolution, with these words upon his lips: "We feel that we too have a right to be here," words that acquire their deep significance in the fact thet he stood there the representative, in name and blood, of that Lee, who, in the State House of Philadelphia, moved the resolution for the Declaration of Independence.

And as if nothing should be wanting to give tone and effect to this new picture of national union, we have had also the fact that a military company came the long distance from Charleston, in South Carolina—that city which was the birthplace of nullification and the cradle of secession—to Boston, that city which, by the South, was the one the most execrated, and that this company was received by the people in the streets, from the platforms, and from the windows of the houses, with tumultuous, reiterated, and long continued shouts of welcome, as it marched in procession to Bunker Hill. And lastly, we have had the effect which this warm welcome produced in the South,

with a statement of which, from a Southern newspaper, the *Charleston News*, I will close my address. "The Southern visitors," says the editor of that paper, "went to Boston in a representative capacity, and in that capacity they were received. Every kind word uttered to them was intended to reach the ears of those who were at home. There in Boston, face to face with the memories of days when the only strife between the States was who should do the most for the republic, the North or the South, put away all the bitter feelings of the days when the States were arrayed in battle against each other. Will the new friendship of June 17th pass away like these? No! it will not. The South has learned to look at the government of the United States as her government—to the United States flag as her flag, and understands that her grievances must and can only be remedied by peaceful and constitutional means. The North has learned to respect the South and the South the North. This could not have happened at an earlier period. It needed such a gathering as the commemoration of Bunker Hill to make soldiers and citizens feel that without respect there could be no confidence, peace or reconciliation. That the union which now both desire, could not be had whilst the North looked down upon the South, or the South was expected to bow in submission to the North," and the editor concludes with what will receive a hearty response throughout the length and breadth of the land, which is, that from Maine to the Carolinas, from the Gulf of Mexico to the farthest limit of our western States, we all now stand on the Bunker Hill platform—"One flag, one Country, and one Destiny."

WHAT PRODUCED THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

ORATION

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